

It is Valentine's Day on Monday. I know this because I went to the grocery store yesterday for the first time in a long time and was amazed at how many shades of pink exist in this world, and how many examples of crass commercialism dressed up in the guise of "lurve" and romance could be stuffed into one aisle. I have always felt rather Scroogelike about Valentine's Day even though that is a reference to a different holiday, one which I actually like.

I feel about Valentine's Day much as I feel about New Year's Eve – that this celebration inflicted upon us is an imposition. In the case of New Year's Eve, the mandate that one have a great deal of (often drunken) fun at a specific time randomly chosen for us annoys me, in the case of Valentine's Day it is the subliminal message that those in love somehow have more value than those not in a relationship that rankles. Frankly, there should be a "my lover broke my heart and I am still open to the idea of love" day or a "my longtime partner betrayed me and destroyed my ability to ever trust again but I am still standing" festival, or – better yet – a "I am really happy with my life on my own terms and don't want to compromise for someone else's needs" day. Now, I'd pop the cork on a Champagne bottle and make a celebratory meal for anybody for one of those holidays. Valentine's Day? Meh, not so much. Not for nothing is the day of love named after the patron saint of martyrs.

The fact that I am not romantic when in a relationship, and pretty pragmatic when out of one, and not a fan of pink, or hearts, or xs and os on my best day is simply my opinion, however. Those of you who are starry-eyed romantics – enjoy your day. Those of you who are not in a relationship and love Valentine's Day -- consider me your Valentine. Those of you busy planning an all-pink dinner for tomorrow (I offer beet risotto as a main course suggestion) or rushing to buy lingerie before the stores close – I salute you too. I do.

But I offer one tiny nugget of advice to all, which distills into one sentence what I have been trying to express above: rather than commercialize love and celebrate

it annually on a grand scale on the 14th of February, how about we all show it in small ways, every day, all year round? Just a thought.

On that crotchety note, here are the recipes that made it into the archives this week.

[Buttermilk Pancakes](#)

[Pork and Eggplant Nikuman](#)

[Brussels Sprouts "Frilatke"](#)

[Steamed and Roasted Winter Vegetables with Miso-Peanut Dressing](#)

[Takikomi Gohan \(made again and recipe updated\)](#)